

Will the broadcast flag interfere with consumers ability to make copies of DTV content for their personal use, either on personal video recorders or removable media?

Yes. It is not uncommon to copy broadcast materials for traditional "Fair Use" purposes, e.g., in order to replay a portion of a newsmaker interview to stimulate classroom discussion. The digital flag would presumably make this use of DTV content impossible.

Would the digital flag interfere with consumers ability to send DTV content across networks, such as home digital networks connecting digital set top boxes, digital recorders, digital servers and digital display devices?

It is difficult to understand how a "digital flag" would function to permit data transmission on a home or school intranet while preventing its transmission on the Internet. However, I lack the technical background to answer the question without reservation.

Would the broadcast flag requirement limit consumers ability to use their existing electronic equipment (equipment not built to look for the flag) or make it difficult to use older components with new equipment that is compliant with the broadcast flag standard?

It is difficult to understand how this would be accomplished.

Additionally, the effect may well be either to undermine sales of new "digital flag" equipment, incentivize the development of means to defeat the flag sensor, or create a black market for electronic equipment that did not limit consumer use. Inclusion of a technical means to compel the public to do something it doesn't want to do has often met with failure, e.g., the well-intended seatbelt interlocks of the mid -'70s.

Would a broadcast flag requirement limit the development of future equipment providing consumers with new options?

Speculative, but a reasonable concern.

What will be the cost impact, if any, that a broadcast flag requirement would have on consumer electronics equipment?

Presumably, the effect will be to raise the cost, reducing already weak demand for digital television, and encourage retention of older, non-lobotomized, dogital electronics.

Other Comments:

The digital content producers are attempting to cast the Federal Government as a modern King Canute, trying to hold back the tide of technical progress. The history of information is that it has become more easily and widely reproduced and less expensive, from the precious hand-copied works of the monks, through Gutenberg's handset type, to modern mass media. To obtain an appropriate return on investment, producers have evolved their economic models as information media have evolved. It is time for the producers to change their market model again, not to attempt to plant their broadcast flag in a legal Maginot Line.